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Holocaust Survivors' Memoirs Project
c/o World Jewish Congress
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New York, N.Y. 10022

I write this after the events of September 11th. For fifty years since I came to the United States, I had basked in the safety of life on these shores. When the Towers fell, I was literally struck speechless. Words to discuss it with family and friends would not come. Hadn't I left the perilous century of my earlier life behind?

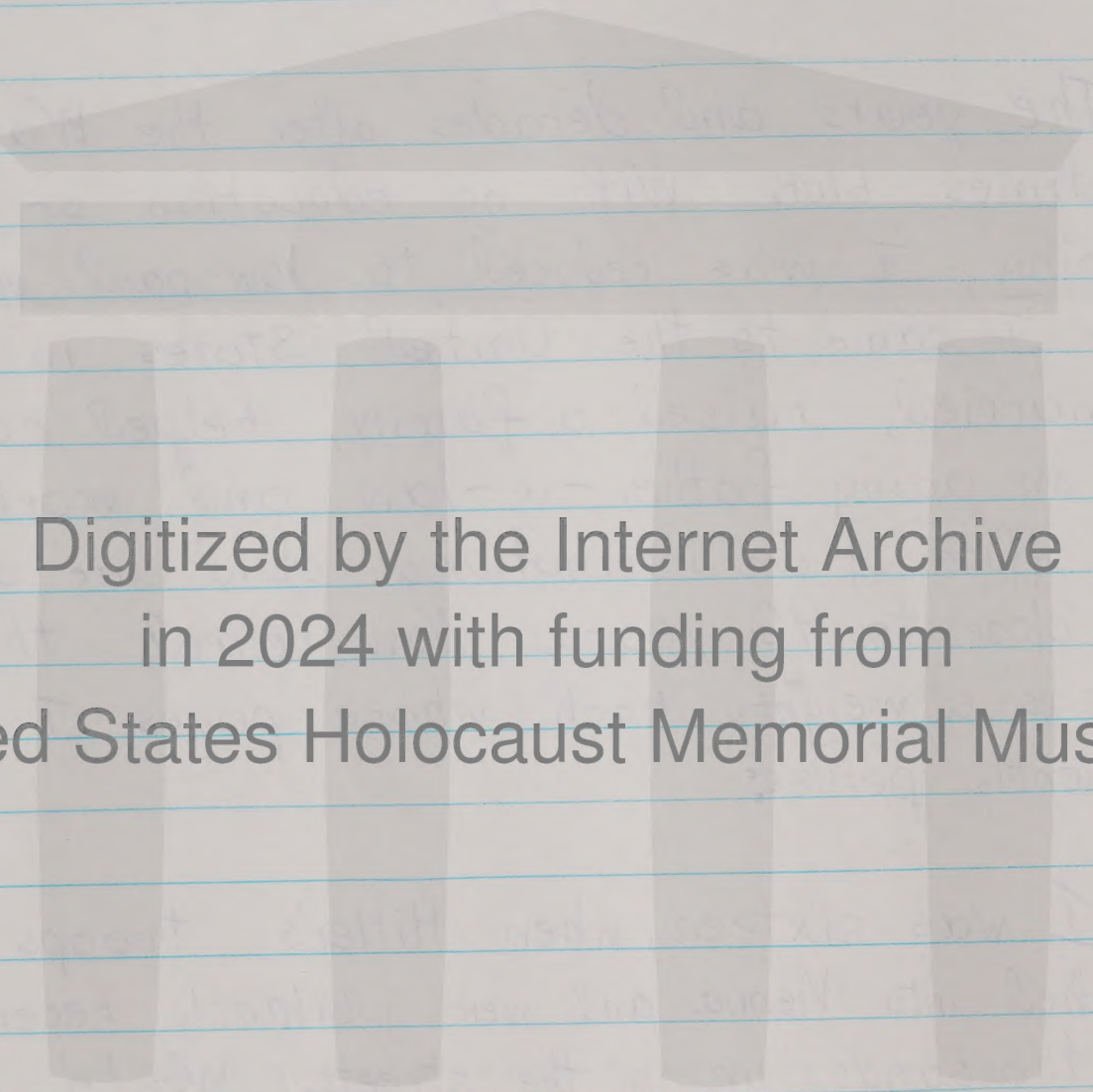
I had been my family's only survivor, having escaped to England as a teen in 1939. In 1940, I lived through the London Blitz. I saw bombs crashing down night after night, and the city burned all around

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us. I woke to see the house next door in rubble, its inhabitants gone.

The years and decades after the War, sometimes blur. With no education or training, I was reduced to low-paid work. After I came to the United States in 1950, I married, raised a family, helped care for an aging father-in-law and worked in the office of an international child care agency for close to 40 years. Now retired, the past is a weighty book whose pages I frequently peruse:

I was sixteen, when Hitler's troops marched into Vienna and were jubilantly received by thousands lining the streets. World politics, at that time, were farthest from my mind. I was fortively trying out my mother's make-up, longing for pretty clothes, and was discovering boys. But all of those normal teenage pursuits vanished from my life, when the world began crashing down around me.



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My parents were no longer allowed to work and money grew short. Lifelong neighbors no longer looked our way. My best friend was forbidden to speak to me. I witnessed the heartbreaking sight of old Jewish men being forced to kneel in the streets, scrubbing them clean with toothbrushes dipped in a bucket of lye. At the event of KRISTALLNACHT our apartment was plundered and we were tossed out into the street. My older brother went into hiding, then under cover of night escaped to Belgium. In May 1939 I waved good-bye to my tearful parents from the train that carried me to England. Once there, I did housework, cared for small children and finally worked in a factory sewing buckles onto leatherbelts. In 1941, I joined the "Auxiliary Territorial Service" (ATS), the woman's section of the British Army. I served for $4\frac{1}{2}$ years, until the end of the War.

The following decades were an Odyssey

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of trying to find out about my lost family. I wrote to archives and Search Committees and, like a jigsaw puzzle, over the years things fell into place. My father died in Vienna in 1941. They said it was from a broken heart. Later that year, the Gestapo came for my mother. She was taken to a Collection Center for Jews to be deported to their deaths. Her transport left Vienna on November 28, 1941, for Minsk where, on arrival, she was shot by firing squad. My brother's path was more difficult to trace. He managed to survive underground in France until 1944, was then betrayed and sent to Auschwitz. A lovely lady at the archives in Vienna (when I visited there in the early 90's) provided authentic information from one of her many volumes. She cited the number of his transport, how many men, women and children were on it and how many survived by the end of the War. But while there were numbers, there were no names. I am still left wondering what happened

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after my brother arrived at Auschwitz.

My grandmother, at age 82, was hoisted upon a truck and taken to Theresienstadt where she starved to death. Amazingly, 60 years later, information still trickles in about various other family members. Only weeks ago, I received copies of papers disclosing the fate of several uncles and aunts who vanished during the early 1940s and were never heard from again. Of especial poignancy is the end of two brothers, Richard and Alfred who, after arrival at Minsk "were taken to the nearby forest and shot."

Being married, keeping house, raising my children and working a job kept me plenty busy during my new life in the U.S.A. After work, I cooked meals, helped the kids with homework and, in those days before miracle fabrics, often stayed up way into the night ironing the family's clothes. When the children were still small, we'd always end the day with bedtime stories.

I'd tell tales of witches and wizards and beautiful princesses. But never the real life tales of my youthful years. My sons grew up knowing very little about the past. When my daughter, Heidi, came along ten years later, I was more ready to disclose some of those long ago events. Now grown, she has a better understanding of what shaped me and my generation.

In the early 1990s, I finally returned to Vienna after 55 years, with Heidi as my travel companion. Fresh from the modest life in a mid-sized southern town, she fell madly in love with the city's glittering atmosphere. I smiled readily and played "Tourist", visiting palaces and museums and strolling along cobbled streets. But everywhere, I saw the ghosts of the past. I stood outside the house where I was born and grew up and felt the emptiness all around. I knew I would not return. My life was now anchored across the sea,

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in the blessed safety of America, where my children and grandchildren lived.

Several years later, that safety was shattered forever when the hijacked planes struck the Twin Towers of the Trade Center. For our children this means a new dimension to their world of jobs, relationships, bills, visits to the mall, and Television at night. A new factor has been added: FEAR. And we had so hoped for a future free of fear for those who came after us!

Thomas Mummally.

in the physical safety of children when
no children are going to school.

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shortly thereafter when the school
struck the two years before the
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Children's Museum